

Evidence for  
Excellence in  
Education



# Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name?

**Case Study Compendium**

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	
Introduction .....	1
Case study A: EHT of 1 school.....	2
Case study B: EHT of 1 school.....	3
Case study C: EHT of 2 schools .....	4
Case study D: EHT of 4 schools .....	5
Case study E: EHT of 2 schools .....	6
Case study F: EHT of 2 schools.....	7
Case study G: EHT of 3 schools .....	8
Case study H: EHT of 3 schools .....	9
Case study I: EHT of 3 schools .....	10
Case study J: EHT of 9 schools .....	11
Case study K: EHT of 5 schools .....	12
Case study L: EHT of 5 schools.....	13
Outputs suite .....	14
About the organisations who carried out this research .....	15

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the participants who contributed to this research. We are particularly grateful to the executive headteachers, heads of school and other senior leaders, and members of school governing boards who took part in case-study interviews to share their experiences of the executive headteacher role. We would also like to thank the Department for Education for providing access to School Workforce Census data which enabled analysis of the executive headteacher profile. We would like to express sincere thanks to the members of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the National Governors' Association (NGA) and The Future Leaders Trust (TFLT) teams including: Daniele Bernardinelli, Ben Durbin, Jennie Harland, Pippa Lord, Jane Parrack, Margaret Parfitt, Alison Riley, Julie Thompson, Karen Wespieser and Carole Willis (NFER); Ellie Cotgrave, Tom Fellows and Emma Knights (NGA); Hannah Barnett, Matthew Crowder, Julia Lewis, Evan Odell, Jacqueline Russell, Katy Theobald, and Rosaria Votta (TFLT). Many thanks also to Helen Crawley for the design work on the reports.

### **How to cite this publication:**

Wespieser, K. (Ed) (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Case Study Compendium*. Slough: NFER

# Introduction

This Case Study Compendium provides an overview of the 12 cases that were investigated as part of the study '*Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name?*' (Lord *et al.*, 2016).

The case study overviews are based on in-depth analysis and research as described in the full report (*ibid*) and the *Technical Appendix* (Harland and Bernardinelli, 2016). All examples have been simplified in order to provide a compendium of comparable cases and to highlight the distinctive features where relevant.

For each case, we provide brief information about the 'setting' (primary, secondary, all-through or special school). We then identify the 'strategic purpose' of the executive headteacher (EHT) role, based on our analysis of the rationale for EHT posts (Figure 1). We also highlight the 'role focus' of each case, based on the four distinct roles identified during the research as being features that distinguish the EHT role from that of traditional headteacher (HT).

Each case study also lists up to five of the most common qualifications that EHTs hold<sup>1</sup>, and includes a short note on an effective feature that may be replicable for others.

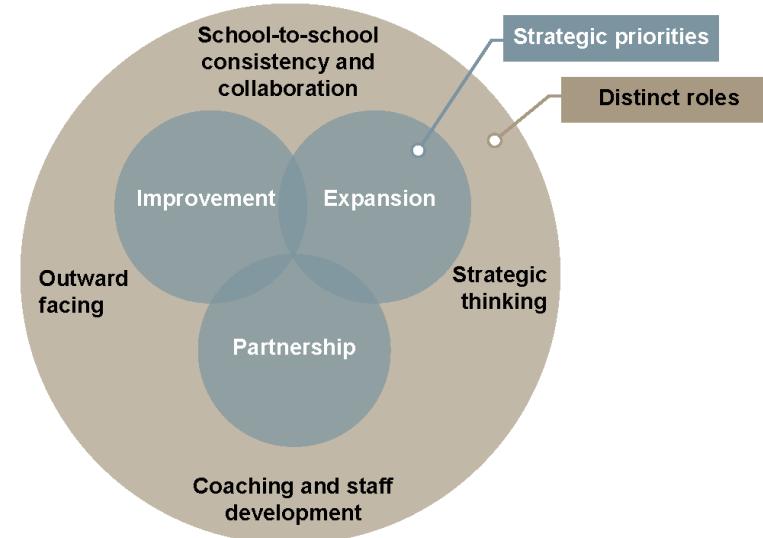
Each case includes a diagram of the governance and accountability structure associated with the EHT post. These diagrams are based on the research team's interpretation of the case following in-depth interviews with the EHT, head of school (HoS) and governors. Whilst it is recognised that organisational structures are often more complex than represented in

these diagrams, they aim to provide an accessible summary of the approaches different cases take. Each diagram highlights the key staff that the EHT manages and the structure that they sit within. In all diagrams, EHTs are coloured green, school staff are coloured blue and non-executive and governance structures are coloured gold. Blue lines show accountability arrangements.

For purposes of comparability, and in order to preserve the anonymity of cases, role and job titles have been edited to a set of common terms.

Each case study as presented in this Compendium was checked for accuracy with the relevant EHT.

**Figure 1: Strategic purposes and distinctive role of EHTs**



**Figure 1**

<sup>1</sup> Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), Local Leader of Education (LLE), National Leader of Education (NLE), Ofsted Inspector

## Case study A: EHT of 1 school

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT has been seconded from his school to support an all-through academy: primary, secondary, and local authority (LA) specialist provision.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

Historically, secondary outcomes at the academy have been weak so the governors sought someone to support rapid school improvement.

However, they also wanted the EHT to look outward and engage with the inter-generational unemployment contributing to pupils' low performance.

### Role focus

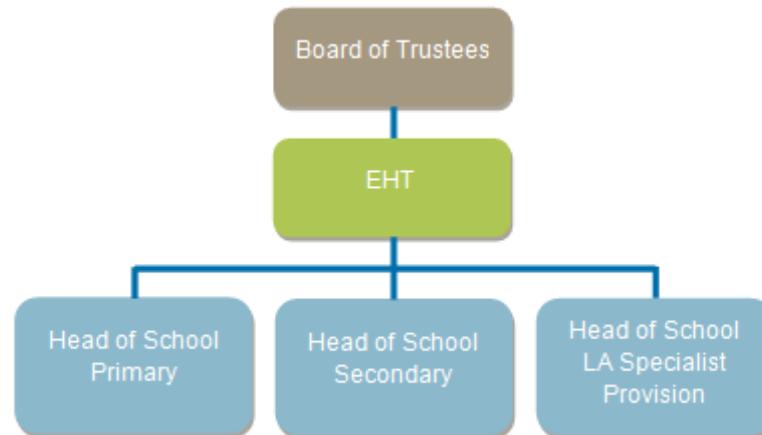
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT supports improvement with a coaching approach, using his experience to diagnose issues, then introducing new techniques or interventions to the relevant head of school, who implements them. He is also building partnerships with the wider community.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (stand-alone academy)



### Replicable feature

The Chair of Governors emphasised that the EHT role should not be introduced without a clear purpose. She suggested that alignment between the Board's vision and the EHT's skills and attitude to education are key to a successful EHT position.

## Case study B: EHT of 1 school

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT oversees an all-through, multi-site LA-maintained community teaching school.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The post was created to oversee the expansion of a secondary school to become an all-through school including a large, newly-built primary school. It provides a distinctive and pragmatic layer of leadership over the two school phases on separate sites.

### Role focus

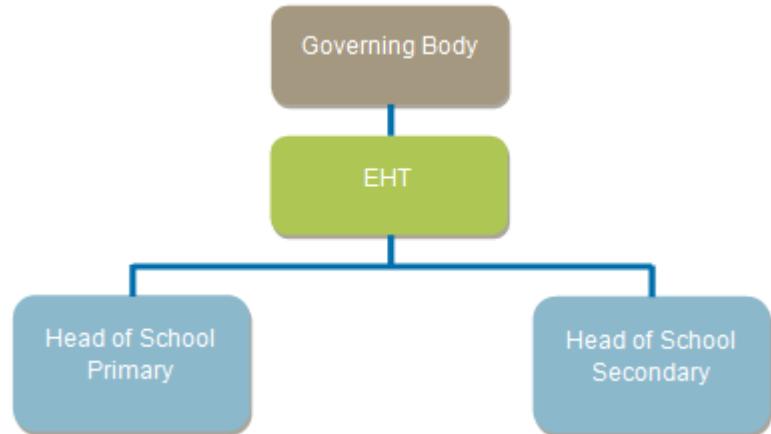
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT focuses on ensuring consistencies and outstanding practice at the school. The EHT structure has created increased capacity for school-to-school support, for which the EHT focuses on the more strategic aspects.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (maintained)



### Replicable feature

The distributed leadership structure provides flexibility and capacity to divide up leadership aspects to play to people's strengths. The EHT focuses on standards and is 'the thread making sure that all standards run across the schools'. The heads of school are line-managed by the EHT and empowered to take ownership of their schools (e.g. by leading senior leadership team (SLT) meetings and school improvement plans).

## Case study C: EHT of 2 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT oversees a federation consisting of an infant school and a junior school. The EHT also manages a teaching school.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The post was created to support the headteachers of the infant and junior school to work in unison within their federation.

### Role focus

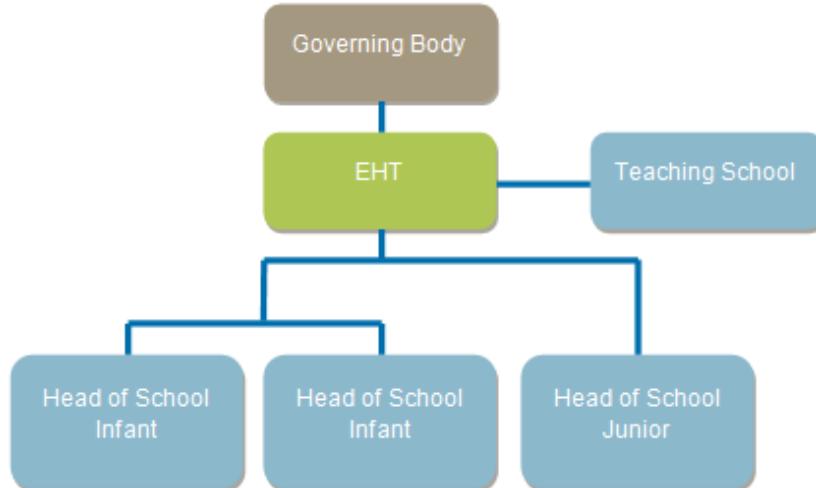
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT focuses on ensuring consistencies and outstanding practice across the two schools. The EHT structure has increased capacity for management and school-to-school support.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (federation)



### Replicable feature

The EHT explained that his HoS are excellent and that this has a massive impact on the day-to-day job of the EHT, including physical and mental wellbeing. For an EHT, making sure that the right staff are recruited and retained is vital.

## Case study D: EHT of 4 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT leads a small multi-academy trust (MAT) of four schools – two secondary (both single-sex), one sixth form and one primary school. The CEO also functions as the EHT of the MAT and serves as an Ofsted inspector.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT post emerged out of the process of growing the MAT and taking on responsibility for more schools.

### Role focus

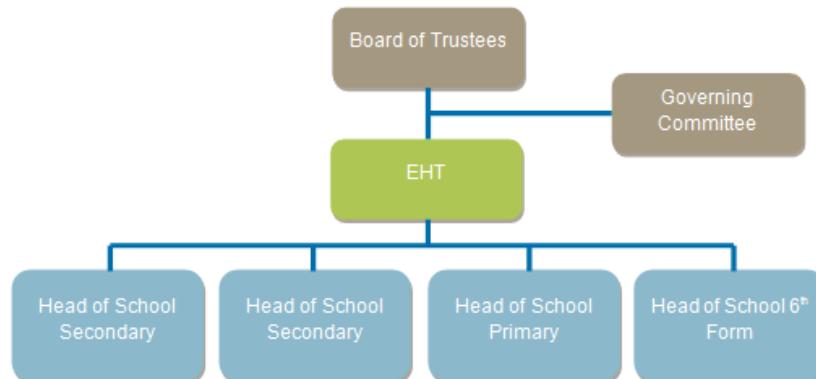
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT is the public face of the MAT. She opens meetings with parents but directs questions to the particular school's SLT. She is also responsible for development of systems to facilitate collaboration and cooperation amongst multiple organisations.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)



### Replicable feature

The Chair of Governors explained that an EHT 'anchors' the work, culture and ethos of his/her schools and it is therefore important to make sure you have the right person in post.

## Case study E: EHT of 2 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT has oversight of two LA-maintained schools, each with its own governing body. The post was created and brokered by the LA to allow an experienced and successful headteacher (HT) in the area to improve a local school, whilst retaining substantive headship over his 'home' school.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT's priority is to bring about rapid and lasting improvement at all levels in the secondment school, whilst maintaining and continuing to improve the outstanding reputation/attainment at the 'home school'.

### Role focus

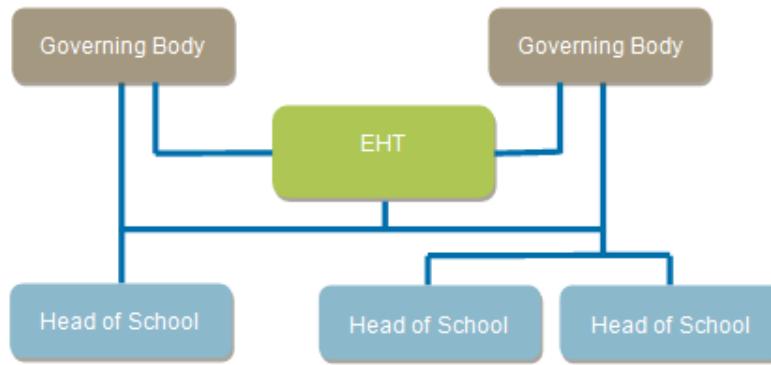
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The role of the EHT is very strategic and focuses on brokering relationships with other agencies. The EHT plays a key role in staff development and recruitment.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (maintained)



### Replicable feature

The EHT explained the importance of being prepared to hand over day-to-day activity and having a set of people to rely on and trust. He also highlighted that having an EHT provides professional development for the HoS looking to step up to HT/EHT roles in the future/

## Case study F: EHT of 2 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT oversees two schools with one federated governing body. Although not all-through, both schools – a primary and secondary school – are located on the same campus.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The two schools have a ‘cross-phase’ feel. The governing body were looking to create a strategy and structure that would oversee the child’s journey from nursery to secondary school, without losing the individual character and ethos of the two separate schools.

### Role focus

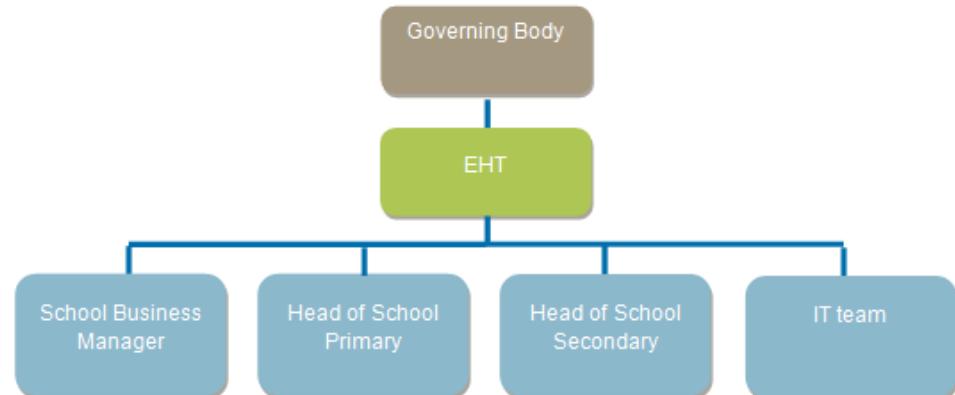
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT has a whole campus overview in terms of strategic leadership. The EHT uses data to hold the schools to account, working with governors and engaging with partners outside the local area.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (federation)



### Replicable feature

The EHT explained that he found it useful to have a wide network of support and connections with other EHTs and the LA, as well as good feedback from a strong internal team.

## Case study G: EHT of 3 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT oversees three primary schools in a small independent MAT.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT post was initially created and brokered by the LA to provide short-term leadership support to a failing school. The EHT role evolved to oversee the academisation, development and expansion of a MAT.

### Role focus

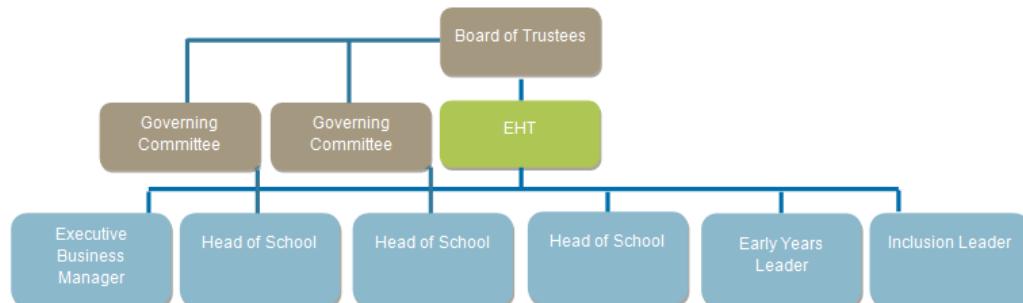
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT role is strategic and outward facing; focused on implementing a Trust Development Plan and quality assurance across the schools.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)<sup>2</sup>



### Replicable feature

The EHT is facilitated in her role by a strong and distributed leadership structure; all members of the leadership team have responsibilities across the schools. This enables consistencies, efficiencies and sharing of learning and resources across schools. Indeed, all staff within the MAT have mobility contracts; providing a flexible and specialised workforce.

<sup>2</sup> Revised structure from September 2016. Note: school 3 is a newly-opened school which does not yet have a Local Governing Committee.

## Case study H: EHT of 3 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT leads three of six schools in a diocese-led primary MAT.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT post was created to give a failing school new direction, drive and vision. The MAT CEO felt that she needed to act quickly so appointed an EHT in an interim position. The interim appointment also allowed the EHT's existing school (also in the diocese) to not suddenly lose a head. The EHT was subsequently permanently appointed.

### Role focus

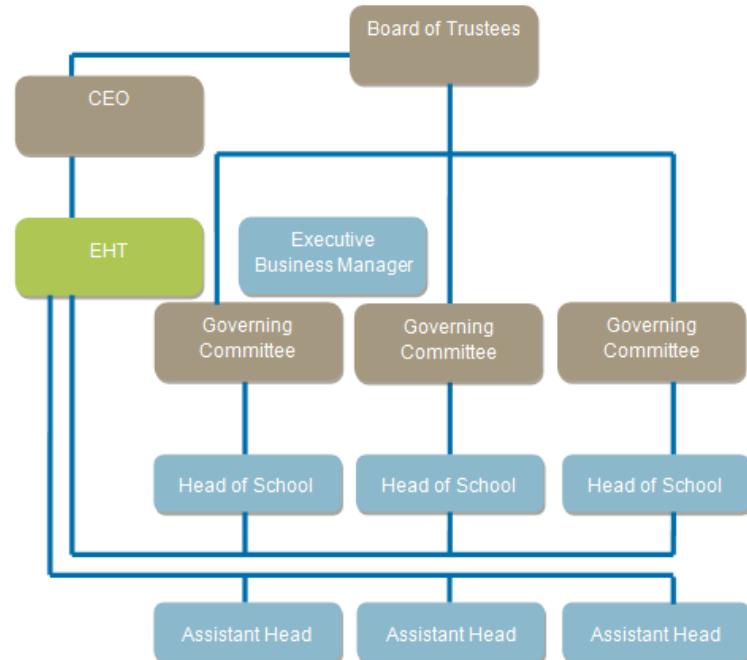
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT role is very strategic; he does not deal with operational issues in any of his schools. He puts a lot of focus on coaching and mentoring staff, especially HoS and other senior colleagues in order to ensure a pipeline of future leaders.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)



### Replicable feature

The EHT warns that you are not the headteacher of three schools; an EHT needs to be able to step out of the role of headteacher and enable the HoS to step forward.

# Case study I: EHT of 3 schools

## Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

When the EHT came into post, he oversaw two schools (a primary and a secondary) in a three-school federation. He now oversees three schools (two primaries and a secondary).

## Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The main priority for the EHT is to drive standards and improvement across the federation. The decision to appoint an EHT, as opposed to a HT, was taken on the advice of the LA.

## Role focus

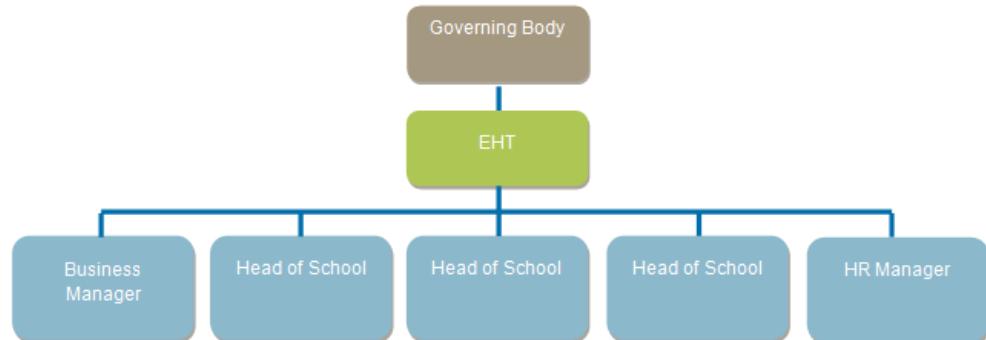
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT leads the schools from a 'strategic and holistic' point of view; he monitors and quality assures what each of the schools is doing and brings together their different approaches.

## Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

## Structure (federation)



## Replicable feature

The EHT recommends that it is important to be both open and honest, including sharing and communicating a vision effectively. The EHT must be available to anyone, but particularly to the HoS. In order to ensure that the role works effectively, there must be a vision for the community and schools, including how schools work within the federation.

## Case study J: EHT of 9 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT is responsible for nine primary schools spread across a largely rural area.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT moved into the role in 2006 when the primary school he led federated with another school. The federation has since turned into a MAT and includes nine schools. The MAT is still growing, taking on new, challenging schools.

### Role focus

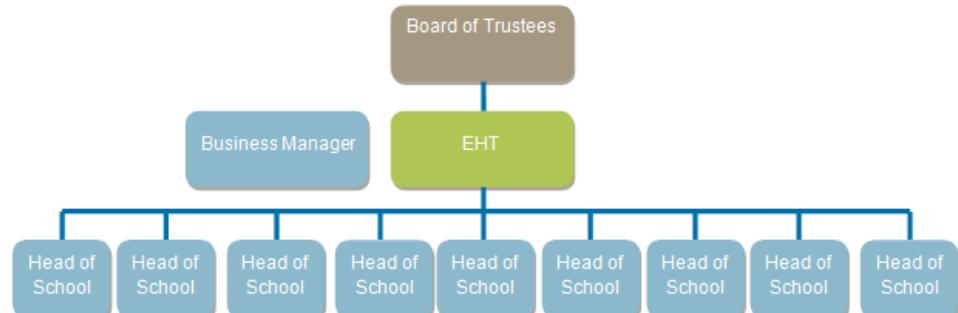
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT is largely in the background. His key responsibility is strategic oversight; challenging and improving school practices; and ensuring that resources are distributed evenly across the MAT and that staff are developed.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)



### Replicable features

The EHT recommends working with an effective business manager and HoS. He suggests growing and developing leaders so there is a shared vision across the MAT from newly qualified teacher through to EHT.

## Case study K: EHT of 5 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT manages five primary academies within a MAT.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

*The EHT stepped up from headship when a new school opened and the HT there needed additional support. Over time, further schools have joined the MAT, often to benefit from similar support.*

### Role focus

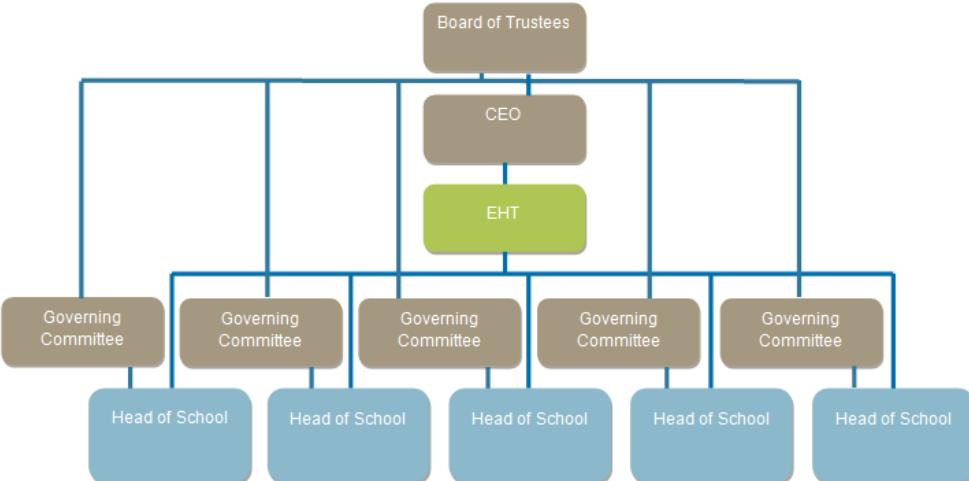
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

*The EHT role has evolved and become more strategic and about empowering others through distributed leadership. The EHT facilitates shared practice across the schools.*

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)



### Replicable feature

The EHT explains that, with multiple schools to manage, you need to prioritise carefully and be focused and rigorous about where time is spent. She felt dedicated administrative support would enable this. Having stepped up from the headship of a school within the MAT, the EHT emphasised the importance of building leadership capacity at the HoS level, so that the EHT can genuinely step away from an operational role.

## Case study L: EHT of 5 schools

### Setting

Primary	Secondary	All-through	Special
---------	-----------	-------------	---------

The EHT is responsible for five schools within a MAT; four secondary and one primary.

### Strategic purpose

Improvement	Expansion	Partnership
-------------	-----------	-------------

The EHT was originally appointed to turn around one under-performing school, replacing the HT. However, the role then evolved as there was a need at a systemic level to build a MAT and to have leadership of that structure. He now carries out the decisions of the MAT board.

### Role focus

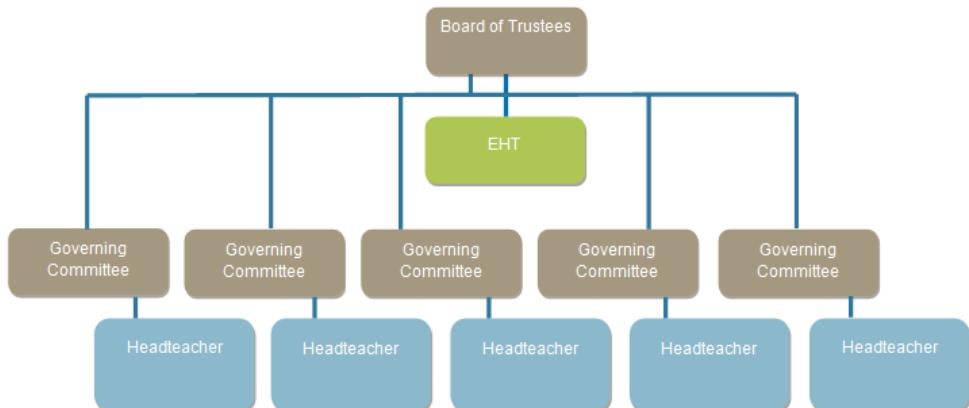
Consistency / collaboration	Outward facing	Strategic thinking	Coaching / staff development
-----------------------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------------------

The EHT role is highly strategic, looking outward to understand system changes and their implications for the schools. He also builds local partnerships. His work with individual schools varies dependent on need.

### Qualifications

QTS	NPQH	LLE	NLE	Ofsted
-----	------	-----	-----	--------

### Structure (multi-academy trust)



### Replicable feature

The EHT recommended a clear accountability structure and creating efficient and consistent governance, for example having standardised reporting across schools. The EHT felt that there was a benefit to being known in the area, and to the schools, prior to appointment.

# Outputs suite

## A Full Report of the Findings

The full report of findings, including key messages and recommendations for policy and practice, why executive headteachers (EHTs) matter, the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs, the circumstances under which schools appoint an EHT, and the facilitating factors, challenges, and development of the EHT role.

### How to cite this publication:

Lord, P., Wespieser, K., Harland, J., Fellows, T. and Theobald, K. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Full Report of the Findings*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

## Executive Summary

A two-page concise summary of the full report.

### How to cite this publication:

Theobald, K. and Lord, P. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Executive Summary*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

## Technical Appendix

The technical appendix provides a detailed account of the methodology used to obtain the data on which the full report is based.

### How to cite this publication:

Harland, J. and Bernardinelli, D. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Technical Appendix*. Slough: NFER.

## Literature Review

The literature review encapsulates existing research on the EHT position in England. It covers three main areas: the history of EHTs in England; the skills, qualities and motivations identified in EHTs; and the governance and school structures associated with EHTs.

### How to cite this publication:

Fellows, T. and Odell, E. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Review of the Literature*. Birmingham and London: NGA and TFLT.

## Case Study Compendium

The compendium provides an overview of each of the 12 case studies that were conducted as part of the research. Each case study includes a description of the setting, the purpose of appointing an EHT, the focus of the EHT role, qualifications of the EHT and replicable features.

### How to cite this publication:

Wespieser, K. (Ed) (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Case Study Compendium*. Slough: NFER.

## Infographic Poster

The infographic poster – included in the full report - displays quantitative data about the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs.

All outputs are available from the following websites:

[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

[www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

[www.future-leaders.org.uk](http://www.future-leaders.org.uk)

## About the organisations who carried out this research



NFER is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education, training and children's services. Our purpose is to provide independent evidence which improves education and training for children and young people.

The research team at NFER for this project included: Daniele Bernardinelli, Jennie Harland, Pippa Lord and Karen Wespieser.

T: 01753 574123 | E: [enquiries@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@nfer.ac.uk) | [www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)



The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent charity representing and supporting governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. The NGA's goal is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We do this by providing information, guidance, research, advice and training. We also work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies, and are the only campaigning national membership organisation for school governors and trustees.

The research team at NGA for this project included: Ellie Cotgrave and Tom Fellows.

T: 0121 237 3780 | E: [governorhq@nga.org.uk](mailto:governorhq@nga.org.uk) | [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)



The Future Leaders Trust's mission is to give children equal opportunities in life, regardless of background, by developing a network of exceptional school leaders. We run a range of leadership development programmes, providing a progression pathway from middle leadership right through to system leadership. All of the programmes are informed by evidence and the expertise of leaders within and beyond education. They all support participants to develop more effective leadership behaviours, so they can drive improvement in schools and multi-academy trusts and help close the attainment gap.

The research team at TFLT for this project included: Evan Odell, Katy Theobald and Rosaria Votta.

T: 0800 009 4142 | E: [enquiries@future-leaders.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@future-leaders.org.uk) | <http://www.future-leaders.org.uk/contact-us/>

Published in July 2016 by the National Foundation for Educational Research,  
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ [www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

© 2016 National Foundation for Educational Research,  
The National Governors' Association, The Future Leaders Trust

ISBN – 978-1-911039-18-1



Evidence for  
Excellence in  
Education

